



Jean Herscholt.



DREAMS OF FORT GARRY

Dreams of Fort Garry

by

ROBERT WATSON, F.R.G.S.

With Wood Cut Illustrations by

Walter J. Phillips, A.R.C.A.

To Jean Hersholt
With Robert Watson's
Compliments
Feb'y 1941.

An epic poem on the life and times of the
early settlers of Western Canada, complete
with glossary and historical notes.

Stovel Company Limited
Winnipeg

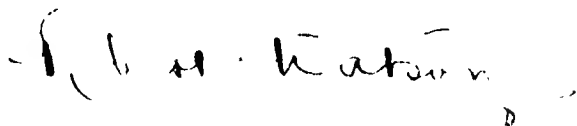
PC 2545
A 876 D7

First Printing November, 1931

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Printed in Canada by Stovel Company Limited

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The Author

The Artist

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331

This poem I dedicate to the pioneers of Western Canada R. W

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FOREWORD

The background of this poem is accurate and from first-hand knowledge; the incidents and scenes depicted are historical facts. Only the thin thread of romance which runs through the poem is fiction.

—The Author.



PART ONE

How pleasant to tarry at Lower Fort Garry,
To sit in the shade of the maples and pines,
To browse and to ponder, to gaze in wrapt wonder
As the prairie's red glory far westward declines.

How restful the river, beloved Red River,
Whose broad, darkling waters glide smoothly at last.
A golden mist lingers, its warm, soothing fingers
Her bosom caressing—the Rapids are past.

The soft breeze comes sighing, the day is fast dying,
The birds seek their nests in the mouths of the guns.
Night shadows are creeping, the grey walls seem sleeping,
The last shaft of light on the sundial runs.

No more does the bell on the tree clang to tell
The end of the day or the passing of man,
Yet needless of warning, come evening and morning,
Come seed-time and harvest—God's Infinite Plan.



'Tis pleasant to tarry at Lower Fort Garry,
To dream of sweet maidens, of men strong and bold,
Who loved and who waited, who wooed and who mated,
Within the Stone Fort in the brave days of old.

Our vision has caught her—the Chief Factor's daughter—
She trips from the residence, over the green.
A pretty poke-bonnet, with flowers upon it,
Adorns this sweet maiden in silk crinoline.

The summer breeze swirls, blows vagrant her curls,
Disturbing her skirts with a summer wind's wiles,
While young men and old ones, the shy men and bold ones,
Forgather to share in the charm of her smiles.

Her basket swings lightly, she steps sure and sprightly,
She heeds not the gallants her beauty entraps.
While hearts thump and flutter, 'tis of eggs, ham and butter
For breakfast on Sabbath she's thinking—perhaps!



PART TWO

By the Fort, near the river, a crowd stands aquiver.
A seethe of expectancy charges the air.
They watch, gay and staid, for the York-boat brigade
That brings, with his chansons, the brave voyageur.

There, close by the wall, in a bright tartan shawl,
Awaiting her lover, and gaudy with bows,
Stands a shy, half-breed maid, boldly there, yet afraid,
Prepared from her head to her moccasined toes.

A squaw, parched and grey, waits her son from the Bay.
She is all unaware he was drowned long ago,
When his boat overturned where the mad rapids churned
And he plunged like a plummet to the whirlpool below.

At the river's first bend waits Baptiste for his friend,
He has saved for this meeting for many a day,
So, by gar! once ashore, won't they drink, and some more?
Maybe, too, have good fight in the voyageur way.



"They're coming! They're coming!" The air is a-humming.
The gate swings. The Factor strides rapidly through.
He is big and commanding. He makes for the landing.
His sweet wife and daughter come hurrying too.

The eyes of the daughter are limpid as water,
Her cheeks the wild roses that bloom by the mill.
She clings to her mother, strives vainly to smother
The throb in her bosom that nothing can still.

A sound of loud voices, a song that rejoices,
A flash of bright colour emblazons the view,
As far down the river, beloved Red River,
The York-boat brigade with its boisterous crew!

A shout from the bowman; fresh shouts from the oarsmen;
Caught up and returned with good measure from shore,
Responding right gladly, six boats spurting madly,
While foam splashes red with each sweep of the oar.



There's Jacques and Belanger, there's Antoine and Longuay,
And noble Pierre with his jaws set and grim.
See La Roche on his oar, and big Jean from La Nore,
Now show us the garcon can wrestle with him.

Great muscles are straining, as, losing or gaining,
These deep-chested heroes pull on to the Fort,
Perspiring and blowing. How garish their showing !
Were ever such fellows for contest and sport?

With laughter and shouting; with chaffing and flouting,
The roistering voyageurs jump clear and dry.
They greet wives and misses with bear-hugs and kisses,
As proud Cree and Sauteaux stand stolidly by.

They unship their pieces, each boat eighty pieces;
Then free for a frolic are fifty stout men,
While Factor meets Trader, that forest invader
Who aches to enfold his fair sweetheart again.



PART THREE

The moon casts a tracing of filigree lacing,
All shimmering white on the Red River's breast.
A dark velvet-blue, with great diamonds shot through,
—The night robe of Heaven on earth is caressed.

Where the river goes winding, two lovers are finding
The trail by the willows as sweet as the night.
With happy hearts burning, they lag in returning,
But now they come back where the Fort gleams with light.

The Men's House is glowing. There joy is o'erflowing.
The dancers beat time with hilarious vim.
The music and laughter resound from the rafter
And float on the night air to Flora and Jim.

Life's gay experiment! Young folks for merriment!
Quickly they scamper to join with the throng.
The Colonel's sweet lady and Judy O'Grady
Were ever twin sisters in dancing and song.



In a rollicking jig—the Red River jig—
Wild dancers are stepping like mad in the ring.
A chair on a table holds old Peter Abell,
Just fiddling his heart out for love of the thing.

With shy, downcast eye each maid shuffles by.
She is proud of her shawl and her cotton-print dress.
She keeps to the beat with her moccasined feet,
But awkwardly giggles to hide her distress.

Now stepping, now cutting, posetting and strutting,
Those men of the forest—what maiden could spurn?
While Time frowns, conspiring, they dance on untiring.
Tomorrow they leave and may never return.

When old Peter Abell steps down from the table
To slocken his thirst from a flagon of rum,
The corner is taken by big Colin Aitken,
With bagpipes and kilt, and the girth of a drum.



To his blowing and skirling the dancers go whirling.
Their shouts rouse the roosters, as dawn comes anew.
To reels and strathspeying the hens will be laying
In egg-shells of tartan, before they are through.

But gladness and sorrow, they come like the morrow,
They pass like the yesterdays nought can recall.
No walls can enfold them, no mortal can hold them,
They come and they go, and the present seems all.

PART FOUR

How pleasant to tarry at Lower Fort Garry,
Her guns and grey bastions savour of fight,
But never did breath from her loopholes speak death,
And ne'er on her walls broke an arrow in flight.

The men from the Northland, the men from the Westland,
The Yukon, Mackenzie, to Garry resort,
From Arctic and Bay they have battled their way
To share in the Council at Red River's Fort.



From lone lands invading, exploring and trading,
All bearded and brawny, and keen to the core,
Chief Factors, Chief Traders, the New World crusaders,
Are meeting and greeting their comrades of yore.

The fur situation, fresh plans for the nation
As yet far-divided and wide as the seas,
The last wish of dead men, the uplift of Red men,
Discussed and decided with masterly ease.

Then men from the Northland, and men from the Westland,
The Yukon, Mackenzie and far Hudson Bay,
Return to their stations with new inspirations,
Prepared with fresh vigour for foray or fray.

PART FIVE

Ah, surely was never such beauty on river,
Such white-robed perfection as spreads to the view,
The quiet and stillness, the tense, gripping stillness,
The dazzle and glitter, the silver and blue !



The frozen air shimmers, it glints and it glimmers,
As if they had shaken the star-cloths on high,
And star-dust, ashiver o'er Fort and o'er river,
Is floating reluctant to earth from the sky.

Like knights nobly crested, in silver mail vested,
The maples and pines at the Fort are arrayed.
On the banks of Red River, the white, solid river,
Their ice-coated army stands still on parade.

The Stone Fort, wrapped snug in its winter-white rug,
Defies zero weather and mad blizzard's blight,
As the smoke from her fires leaps forth and expires,
To linger, a ribbon of cloud in the light.

Like champagne from France, like the music and dance,
Is the keen air of Garry when winter holds sway.
The sunlight eternal, from blue sky supernal,
Brings gladness and health on each glittering ray.



PART SIX

At Lower Fort Garry, though winter should harry,
In labour and leisure live women and men.
A voice stabs the silence, a whip-crack of violence,
The yelping of dogs, and the scene swings again.

All morning the drivers—those hardy survivors
Of blizzard and snowdrift, of ice and of cold—
Their loads have been packing, and lashing, and stacking
Secure on their sleds against troubles untold.

Big in their blanket-coats, snug to their hairy throats,
Mitted and moccasined, belted and gartered,
Drivers and runners stand, waiting their Chief's command.
Stronger and fitter than these never chartered.

As dog with dog wrangles, their coloured fandangles
Disport in the air, and their bells tinkle gay.
With tongues overhanging, now tugging, now fanging,
They whimper, impatient to scamper away.



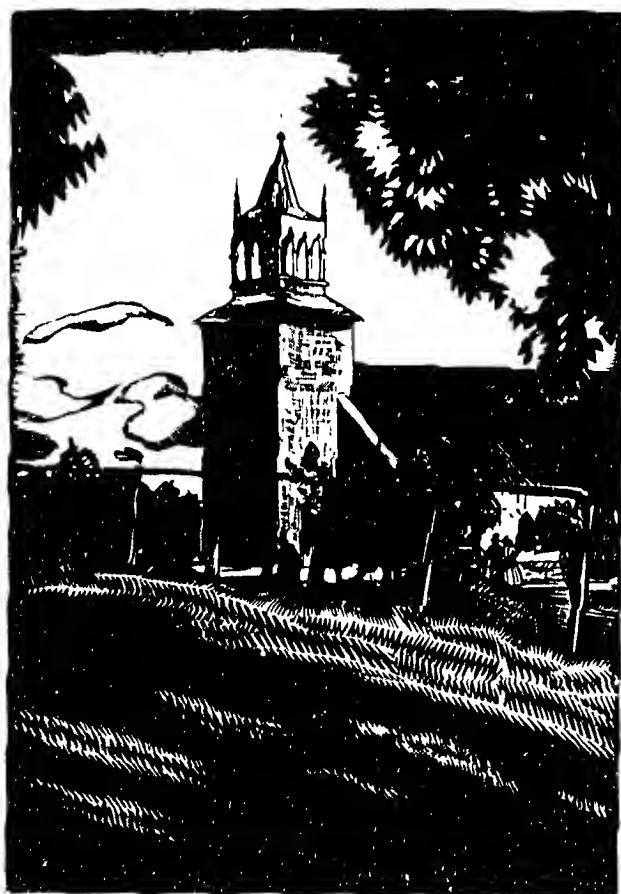
The last hand is shaken, the last message taken,
The watchers step back as the whips flick the snow.
Tails up, ribbons flying, the winter defying,
The dog train is off and 'tis forty below.

With courage and daring, themselves never sparing,
Each man and dog sharing the luck of the trail:
Come hardship, come danger, come Death the Deranger!
"Speed on with the Packet! Deliver the mail!"

PART SEVEN

How fragrant the morning, the still Sabbath morning,
At Lower Fort Garry when summer's in prime,
As robin and thrush warble mellow and lush,
And bees dally, wanton, on clover and thyme.

A warm breeze comes stealing, and brings, sweetly pealing,
The bell of Saint Andrew's—the church on the hill—
From turret and steeple it calls to the people
To worship their God and in peace to be still.



On the trail by the river, the brown, racing river,
From homestead and cottage wend matron and sire,
Workers from soil and bench, daughters and serving wench,
Sons stiff and awkward in Sabbath attire.

The small congregation, with marked hesitation,
Forgathers disjointedly down by the gate,
In numbers collecting, as if half-expecting
The King and his Consort to drive up in state.

Soon, smartly advancing, with white horses prancing,
The gentry come driving—Fort Garry for style!—
With flourish and showing, the grooms, proudly knowing
How good is their picture, pull up with a smile.

Flowered his silken vest, gold chain across his chest,
Trousers drawn tightly o'er strong, shapely limbs,
White cravat round his throat, beaver hat, morning coat,
The Factor looks round, and benevolence brims.



'Tis pleasant to tarry! The Lady of Garry,
On the arm of her husband steps proudly inside.
In watered-silk crinoline, rustling in silver sheen,
She turns to encourage the oncoming bride.

Ah!—now the excitement gets rapid enlight'ment.
The cause of the flurry! The watchers' sweet whim!
For why should maid tarry when Love bade her marry?
Today is the kirking of Flora and Jim.

How gallant her lover—that bold, dashing rover!
How coy and demurely she leans on his arm!
All frills and fine laces, with shy, girlish graces
She smiles to her friends of the homestead and farm.

The bell ceases pealing, the people are kneeling;
The voice of the preacher is vibrant, sincere.
The sunlight comes streaming—a symbol in seeming
That God and his angels are hovering near.



And hark to their singing ! Sweet melody ringing !
As old folk and young join the gladsome refrain,
It starts up a longing, as thoughts come a-thronging.
Will ever men sing with such fervour again ?

In the churchyard surrounding, 'neath stone slabs, confounding,
Lie singers—like butterflies—gone in a day,
While there flows the river, that hoary Red River,
Today and tomorrow, forever and ay.

PART EIGHT

The years speed on quickly. Now trouble crowds thickly.
The ice binds the river with padlock and key,
But at last comes a crashing, a hurtling and smashing,
The death-clutch is riven, the waters burst free.

The cattle are lowing, the spring flood is flowing,
The torrent keeps rising as seldom before.
As onward it urges in great heaving surges,
The Red River's basin can hold it no more.



The settlers sleep never as all up the river
They watch, and the waters reach higher and higher.
Relentlessly creeping, while mothers are weeping,
The flood steals on household, on stable, and byre.

With boats and with barges men rescue their charges,
Their children, their cattle, their small bits of things,
As faster and faster this hopeless disaster,
Like plague, on the settlement fastens and clings.

With raft and bateau, in the sun's afterglow,
They still row despairingly over their farms,
And mothers and daughters, entrapped by the waters,
From upper-room windows are caught in their arms.

With courage and labour each man helps his neighbour.
All battle like heroes in water and mire,
As down on the river, the mad hurtling river,
Float horses and oxen, and houses afire.



Berges, canoes and raft, all sorts of river-craft,
Loaded to sinking, but riding the flow,
Daring the Rapid's race, seeking the safety place
Lower Fort Garry so haply can show.

There, free from sturt and stress, home in the wilderness,
Island of Peace where the weary may bide,
Welcomed and kindly led, comforted, housed and fed,
Safe and secure till the waters subside.

Blest be the thinking man, gifted by Heaven to plan
Stone forts like Garry, on top of a hill,
Where river's wildest spate never can inundate,
Haven of Refuge in good time or ill.

PART NINE

In the Red River Valley, in homestead and chalet,
Unrest and excitement hold merciless sway,
For schisms and factions, by words and by actions,
Have banded the Metis in lawless array.

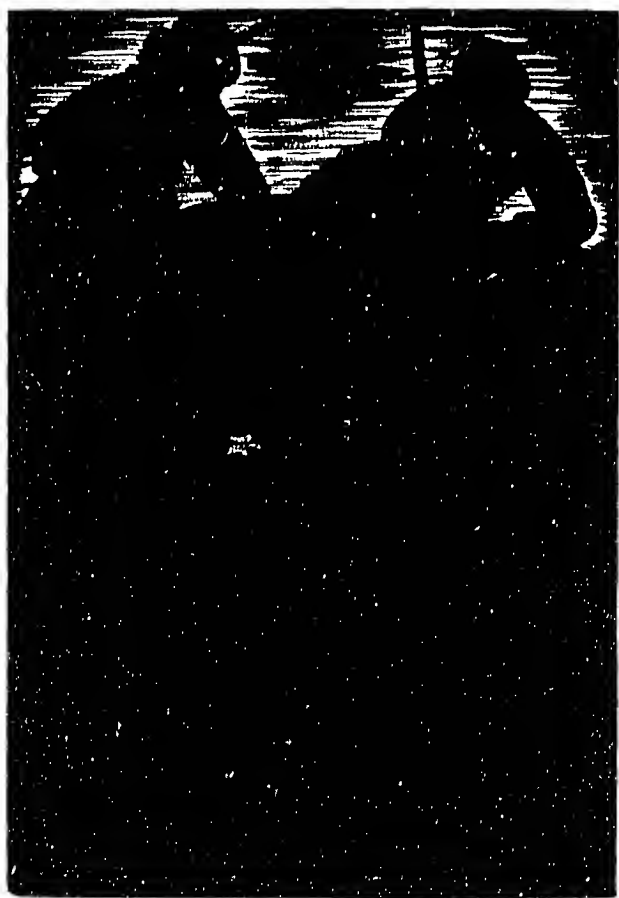


Sermon or song of it, right or the wrong of it,
Blur nor enhance what the couriers tell:
A strange proclamation, and lo, a New Nation !
With Upper Fort Garry possessed by Riel.

At Lower Fort Garry the loyalists carry,
With others, a plan to discomfit Riel,
But bungle and bluster, and mad filibuster,
End up in debacle and prisoners' cell.

Now Schultz, greatly hating the half-breed's dictating,
Obstructed each project of Louis Riel,
And the Metis gave token, by angry words spoken,
He'd shoot Schultz on sight, and the trouble dispel.

To Riel came the warning that Schultz was sojourning
At Lower Fort Garry. He clouded his brow,
Then sleds, men and horses, he mustered his forces,
And set out at midnight to make good his vow.



In the cold, grey of dawning, the chill, wintry dawning,
To Garry's Stone Fort come those sons of New Gaul.
The guards flee in fright at the blood-curdling sight,
—Riel and his cohorts are scrambling the wall.

The Stone Fort, just waking, is theirs for the taking,
And Schultz in the residence waiting his doom!
Riel goes alone, he has much to atone,
He tramps up the stairway and enters the room.

He strides to the bed and uncovers the head—
Of an Archdeacon, dreaming of joys of his youth,
While Schultz, with McVicar and Monkman, mak' siccar,
They are miles on the hard, frozen trail to Duluth.

.

All down the river-banks voices are raised in thanks,
Welcome is shouted from housetops and shore.
Bugles and kettle-drum ! Green-coated soldiers come;
Wolseley is here and Riel's dream is o'er.



At Lower Fort Garry, unnoticed, we tarry,
As soldiers make ready for battle's mad wrack.
War is a young man's sport! "On to the Upper Fort!"
"Pull down yon rebel flag!" "Up with the Jack!"

But cannons' fierce rattle and bloodshed of battle
Are stayed, as if in a God-given order.
The Fort gates stand wide and the troops march inside.
Riel and his chieftains are over the border.

PART TEN

I wake with a shiver. The moon on the river
Is shining in ribbons of silvery hue.
A chill wind is blowing, the bright stars are showing
Like spangles on drapes of a dark-velvet blue.

For long I've been sleeping, with memory sweeping
The by-paths of yesterday clean with a broom,
Fort Garry deserted, the last tram departed,
All moonlight and magic, all brightness and gloom.

How sweet is such dreaming, as visions come streaming,
—The sunshine of yester-years, mellowed and dim—
To hold in its thralling, its welcome enthralling,
The son of the grandson of Flora and Jim.

How pleasant to tarry at Lower Fort Garry,
To picture sweet maidens and men strong and bold,
Who loved and who waited, who wooed and who mated
Within the Stone Fort in the brave days of old.

GLOSSARY

- Antoine**Pronounced An-twone.
- Baptiste**Pronounced Ba-tees.
- Bateau**French, meaning "boat." (See author's Historical Notes and Comments.)
- Belanger**Pronounced Be-lon-jay.
- Belts**L'Assomption Sash. (See author's Historical Notes and Comments.)
- Brigade**Name given to a number of York boats or canoes travelling in company.
- Chansons**Songs of the voyageurs.
- Cohorts**A band or body of warriors.
- Colonel's Sweet Lady and Judy O'Grady** . . .Used by Rudyard Kipling to differentiate between the lady and the maid-of-all-works. The actual quotation is:—"The Colonel's Lady an' Judy O'Grady are sisters under their skins."
- Cree**Tribe of Indians frequenting certain Plains areas, chiefly Manitoba. There are Wood Crees, Plain Crees and Swampy Crees.
- Crinoline**A petticoat, stiffened with hair, wire, et cetera, worn by women in the early days for the purpose of extending their skirts. Name is given to the dress of that period and fashion.
- Factor**Commissioned Officer in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. (See author's Historical Notes and Comments.)

- Garcon** French, meaning "boy."
- Garters** See author's Historical Notes and Comments.
- Jean** Pronounced Jong.
- Kirking** Scottish term signifying the going to church for the first time after marriage, after the birth of a child, or after the loss of a husband, wife, or child.
- Longuey** Pronounced Lon-gway.
- Mak' siccar** Scottish, meaning "make certain." (See author's Historical Notes and Comments.)
- Metis** Pronounced mee-tees. Singular and plural same form. The word applies to halfbreeds of Indian blood, but chiefly to those whose European ancestry is French.
- Mitts** Gloves. (See author's Historical Notes and Comments.)
- Moccasins** Footwear. (See author's Historical Notes and Comments.)
- Packet** Mail. The name was given also to the outfit conveying it.
- Pieces** Packages of merchandise. (See author's Historical Notes and Comments.)
- Pierre** Pronounced Pe-er.
- Plummet** A weight, generally of lead, attached to a line and used for sounding the depth of water.

- Red River Jig.** The most popular of the old-time jigging dances performed in the Red River settlement. Much clever stepping and tapping are done in this when danced by good performers.
- Reel** A Scottish figure dance.
- Saulteaux** A branch tribe of the Chippewa or Ojibway Indians who frequented the territory adjacent to the Red River settlement. Their Chief Peguis was a Christian and a good friend to the Selkirk Settlers.
- Schisms** Divisions or separations.
- Slocken** Scottish, meaning "quench."
- Spate** Scottish, meaning "flood."
- Squaw** Indian woman. Usually used in the same term as "wife."
- Strathspey** A Scottish figure dance, in slower time than the reel.
- Thyme** An Old Country plant with a sweet aroma. Many British plants and flowers were to be found in early Red River gardens, the seeds having been brought in, or shipped in later, by the settlers.
- Train** Name given to a number of dog sleds travelling in company.
- Wench** Intended to convey the old British meaning only—a young lass. Not to be interpreted in the modern derogatory or slurring sense.

HISTORICAL NOTES

AUTHOR'S HISTORICAL NOTES AND COMMENTS

Part One

Lower Fort Garry lies eighteen and one-half miles north of the present City of Winnipeg, about one and one-half miles below Saint Andrew's Rapids. Its construction was commenced in 1831 and completed in 1839. Lower Fort Garry is the only stone fort of the early fur-traders, still intact and in first-class preservation.

The Fort encompasses four and one-half acres of ground. It was the Seat of Government for Rupert's Land for a time.

Part One—Verse Six—"Chief Factor"

As a matter of history, no Chief Factor was ever in charge at Lower Fort Garry. The Fort was very often in care of a Chief Trader. A Factor usually had charge of a district, or of a number of posts.

Part Two

Lower Fort Garry was the ultimate destination of the York-boat brigades from York Factory and other points.

The York-boat was evolved in the early eighteen-thirties. It carried a crew of eight voyageurs, including a bowsman and a steersman, also the official in charge, besides a cargo. It was provided with a mast and sail for use when weather conditions were suitable. Its dimensions were from twenty-eight to forty feet long, seven to eight feet in beam, and three to four feet in depth. The oars were about twenty feet long.

The voyageurs were chiefly French Canadian and Highland Scots. It was customary for the various crews to stop a few miles from their destination to deck themselves out in their gayest trappings, in order to make a brave showing at the Fort. They painted the blades of their oars vermilion, for colour and effect. The crews used to race one another in their boats to the landing place.

The cargo of the York-boat was put up in packages called "pieces." These were arranged in standard weights of about one hundred pounds each, for convenience in carrying across portages. They were termed "inland pieces." A York-boat cargo was reckoned at eighty pieces of merchandise.

Part Two—Verse Twelve—"Trader"

This was a rank of a junior officer of the Hudson's Bay Company. The old ranking was—Apprentice, Clerk, Trader, Junior Chief Trader, Chief Trader, Factor, Chief Factor, and Inspecting Chief Factor. This ranking was abandoned for a time, but has recently been revived with certain changes. The lowest "commissioned" rank, in the early days, was Junior Chief Trader.

Part Three

On arrival at their destination, after unloading their cargo, a feast and a dance were the order of the day and night for the voyageurs. This afforded them an opportunity for meeting old friends and making new ones. At these conviviais, the fiddle and the bagpipes furnished the music for the old-time dances—Red River Jig, Eight-hand Reel, Drops o' Brandy, Duck Dance, Rabbit Dance, Kissing Dance, Canadian Quadrilles, Polka, Schottische, Highland Fling, et cetera.

Many marriages were the outcome of those happy gatherings, the voyageurs often coming back by canoe for their brides after the return journey on the York-boat had been made. . ,

Part Three—Verse Two The Trail by the Willows

Small silver willows are still to be seen along the trail on the west bank of the Red River, just north of the Fort

Part Three—Verse Three—"The Men's House"

This is a large house within the walls of the Fort where the men lodged and passed their spare time. Here conviviais and dances were held.

Part Four

It is an historical fact that no fighting ever took place between whites and half-breeds or Indians at Lower Fort Garry.

The Stone Fort was one of the chief forts of the Hudson's Bay Company. Sir George Simpson, Governor of Rupert's Land, resided here at one time. He held Council in the residence on several occasions with his Factors and Chief Traders. Those men governed the country and held the destiny of a nation in embryo in their hands.

Part Five

The Lower Fort was always noted for its sequestered beauty. This was much enhanced by the maple and pine trees within its grey walls.

Part Six

The Winter Packet, or mail, for the distant fur-trade posts, left Lower Fort Garry at specified times, by dog train. The arrival and departure of the Packet were important events in the life at the fort.

The dog drivers vied with one another in the smart appearance, the speed and the stamina of their dogs. Teams generally comprised five to seven dogs, and these could travel forty miles a day over hard, open country, each dog hau'ing approximately one hundred pounds. The dogs were usually decked out with bells and balls of coloured wool fixed on wires and attached to their harness.

Part Six—Verse Three—"Mitted and moccasined, belted and gartered"

Mitts (gloves), generally of deerskin, and usually beaded or with coloured silk sewn through.

Moccasins—footwear of deerskin or other soft leather, usually ornamented with beads or coloured silk thread. Worn by the North American Indians and by the half breeds.

Belts—the gaily-coloured L'Assomption sash or belt, of Quebec origin, hand made from wool. It has been said that the making of an inch of sash was a whole day's work. This sash was much favoured by French-Canadian voyageurs and dog-drivers. It was worn around the waist, generally outside the coat, and was a showy piece of clothing.

Genuine L'Assomption sashes are becoming rare.

Garters—these garters, worn by the men over their trousers just below the knees, were sometimes made of a variety of coloured wools, sometimes of cloth or soft leather embroidered with silk or ornamented with beads or porcupine quills.

Part Seven

Saint Andrew's Anglican Church still stands on high ground, overlooking the Red River, above the Rapids—a beautiful relic of the early Red River days and its first attempts at building in stone. The first Saint Andrew's Church was built in 1832. It was rebuilt of stone during 1844-1849, from the plans of Archdeacon Cochrane, one time chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company. The stonework was the handicraft of Duncan McRae, a Hebridean stone-mason, who also dressed and set up much of the stonework of Lower Fort Garry.

Part Seven—Verse Five—"Grooms"

The old British custom of having coachmen and grooms was often favoured in the early days by those who held positions of importance in the community and could afford the luxury.

Part Eight

The Red River flood of 1852, so vividly portrayed by David Anderson, D.D., First Bishop of Rupert's Land, in his "Notes of the Flood at the Red River in 1852," is here depicted afresh. The incidents as related were actual happenings.

Lower Fort Garry stands high on the west bank of the Red River. One of the reasons for this choice of location was a desire to provide a place of safety in time of just such a flood. The earlier flood of 1826 demonstrated the need for this.

During the flood of 1852, Lower Fort Garry became a veritable Haven of Refuge to the homeless.

The foresight of Sir George Simpson in this matter proved exceedingly valuable.

Part Eight—Verse Five—"Bateau"

French word for "boat," but the bateau differed from a canoe or what was known as a boat. Bishop Anderson states: "A boat is like those at home, about thirty feet long, and is rowed by eight or ten men.

"A bateau is merely the trunk of a tree hollowed out, paddled by one or two; while the canoe is of birch-rind, so light that it is carried across points of land by one or two men."

Part Nine

Louis Riel, son of "The Miller of the Seine," headed the Métis uprising of 1869-70. He seized Upper Fort Garry. The Lower Fort was left in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company officials and became the headquarters of many of the loyalists.

Part Nine—Verse Four—"Schultz"

Dr. John Schultz was a medical practitioner in the Red River settlement, who, in 1865, became the sole proprietor of the newspaper, the "Nor' Wester." Dr. Schultz strongly opposed Louis Riel. He was imprisoned by Riel in the Upper Fort, and for a time his life was in grave danger. He escaped from the Upper Fort and ultimately got safely out of the country.

Dr. Schultz became Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, 1888 to 1896, and was knighted by Queen Victoria for his loyal services.

Part Nine—Verse Six—"New Gaul"

Gaul was ancient France. New Gaul—New France. During the rebellion, Riel is said to have hoisted a flag symbolizing his new dispensation, and on this flag was imprinted the fleur-de-lis. Riel also issued a Proclamation to the people of the Red River.

Part Nine—Verse Eight—"Archdeacon"

History relates that the man whom Riel found in bed at Lower Fort Garry on the eventful night of his raid there in search of Dr. Schultz, was Archdeacon McLean.

Part Nine—Verse Eight—"Mak' siccar"

This is a Scottish phrase, meaning "make certain." It is an historic phrase, linked with the slaying of the Red Comyn, a claimant to the Scottish throne in the time of Sir William Wallace and Sir Robert the Bruce. The Red Comyn was stabbed to death at Dumfries, before the high altar in the church of the Minorite Friars. The deed was committed by Sir Robert the Bruce and Sir Roger Kirkpatrick.

During the enactment of the drama, Robert the Bruce is recorded hurrying out from the convent and remarking:

"I doubt, Sir Roger, I have slain the Red Comyn."

"You doubt! Then I'se mak' siccor," replied Kirkpatrick, rushing back and completing the deadly work.

This phrase became the motto of Kirkpatrick's family, their crest being a hand holding a dagger, in pale, distilling drops of blood.

Part Nine—Verse Nine—"Wolseley"

Colonel Wolseley, in command of the Sixtieth Rifles, and other detachments of regular soldiery, including the Abyssinian Battery of the Royal Field Artillery, reached Lower Fort Garry on the morning of 23rd August, 1870, and immediately prepared for an assault on Louis Riel's stronghold--the Upper Fort. History recounts the flight of Riel and his lieutenants, Lepine and O'Donohue, across the American border, leaving the Upper Fort open for Wolseley's bloodless occupation.

The names of many of the soldiers of the Wolseley Expedition are still to be seen on the pillars of the eastern gateway of the Stone Fort, carved there by the men themselves while in garrison.

After the North West Rebellion of 1885, Louis Riel was tried for treason and hanged.

Part Nine—Verse Nine—"Green-coated soldiers"

The riflemen of the Red River Expedition were so clad. The sombre colour of their uniforms did not impress the Indians favourably.

Colonel Robertson Ross, who spent the summer of 1873 in the West, investigating the possible need for a mobile force there for purposes of law and order, suggested a change in the uniforms.

"Who are these soldiers," the Indians had asked of him, "wearing dark clothes? Our old brothers wore red coats. We know that the soldiers of the Great Mother wear red coats."

They still remembered, or had heard of, Colonel Crofton's red-coats of 1846.

It is thus that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police wear red coats.